

A Framework for Concept Development in Architectural and Interior Design Education

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The foundation of education in architecture and interior design is the design studio. Here, the students are expected to be engaged in the creative design process, and arrive at design projects at required level of complexity. Design instructors believe that not only the product but also the process of design, which fosters critical thinking and creativity, are significant components of design pedagogy.

With an ongoing debate on how design process is carried out by designers, research suggests that a primary generator- or a concept- during the initial phases of design pre-structures how the design will progress and continue; which is then modified and reshaped through further dwelling into the design problem. However, students in the earlier years of design education often exhibit reluctance and difficulty in how to start a project, and navigate through the design process. Therefore, a framework to guide students in sources of conceptual generation is found fruitful.

With the objective of expanding student' horizons of how projects can be approached, and to be of assistance at the initial phases of design, a lecture series have been developed. Here, the sources of concept generation in architecture and interior design are categorized as: Symbolism, context (which includes cultural and geographical context), program, geometry and structure. The theoretical framework of the lecture is based on the foundation literature on design methods and processes, analysis of many international and national examples, as well as 20 years of personal experience in professional practice. Cases are enriched with the explication of design phases, including sketches, models, verbal explanations that reveal different stages of design development.

The lecture is presented in numerous architecture and interior design programs in Turkey within the last decade. In 2015 and 2016, a survey has been conducted in three universities' architectural departments where it was presented for third and fourth year students. Ninety two students answered the survey which was handed out immediately after the lecture. The research explored, from the students' perspective, what they learned from the lecture. Results reveal that the students found the lecture very successful in explicating concept formation and development. They found different categories insightful and were particularly impressed with process diagrams and sketches turning into design outcomes. The lecture encouraged them to widen their perspectives. Overall, a framework that is provided for students to learn how to engage with a project seems to be operational and helpful in directing them in the progression of design.